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**INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL THEORIST GENE SHARP ON 2011 EGYPTIAN MASS
PROTESTS**

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On February 11, 2011, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was forced out of office after 18 days of mass protests throughout Egypt. The protests, which capped several years of escalating political discontent and were a “stunning example...of why civil resistance works,” incorporated nonviolent strategies that have been propagated internationally over the last four decades by “pre-eminent theorist and historian on nonviolent power” Gene Sharp (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, 230; Hastings 2002, 48). Gene Sharp is a prominent and prolific author of books about the use of nonviolent action to overthrow dictatorial regimes. Sharp’s work is known to have been circulating among some Egyptian activists (Maher 2011). This research project investigated the possible influence of Sharp’s work on the events of the 2011 mass uprising in Egypt, using the disciplines of history, religious studies, and political science. These three disciplines are included in this student’s Bachelor of Individualized Study concentration in Middle East Studies, an interdisciplinary field which incorporates social sciences and history along with religion, language and literature. The controversies discussed in this paper about Sharp’s influence revisit several well-known problems in Middle East Studies.

The process of answering the research question about Sharp’s possible influence on the Egyptian mass protests of 2011 revealed a topic mired in political controversy. The most apparent aspect of this controversy was fueled by English-language media reports on Sharp which variously dubbed him “prophet,” “guru,” and “genius behind” the Egyptian revolution. This reporting triggered a strong negative reaction from many Egyptians and Arabs who felt that Western media was falsely attributing the success of their revolution to a white savior figure,

even a “Lawrence of Arabia” (Stolberg 2011). A February 21, 2011, write-up by Ruairidh Arrow for the BBC asserted that Sharp was “credited with the strategy behind the toppling of the Egyptian government.” Such claims were badly received in light of a long history of writing about the Middle East rife with Orientalism, assumptions about Arab exceptionalism, and consistent US support for Arab dictatorships. Underneath the highly charged political debate the essence of the question remains: what was Sharp’s influence on Egyptian activists? Evidence revealed in the course of research for this project suggests that Sharp’s writings were consulted by Islamic reformers who were a leading force in introducing his ideas to anti-regime activists in Egypt. Several activist groups working in concert proceeded to disseminate his work widely. Ironically, this research project discovered that Sharp’s influence itself is not considered problematic by the activists involved.

Project Overview

The throngs of Egyptians who filled Tahrir Square to oppose the regime of Hosni Mubarak in late January 2011 transfixed television viewers worldwide with their courage and perseverance. The mass uprising drew global attention for several reasons: the sheer number of Egyptians in the streets, the drama of the ebb and flow of clashes with police, the creative and often humorous slogans, street theater, and positive spirit of the protesters. The global media chose to focus on two apparently novel aspects of the mass protests: the use of social media like Facebook and Twitter to organize the protests, and the nonviolent ethos of the masses symbolized by their chant, “*Silmiyya, silmiyya*” (“peaceful, peaceful”), which competed with “*Irhal! Irhal!*” (“Leave! Leave!”) aimed at Mubarak. The worldwide interest in these dramatic events stimulated the publication of many articles across a variety of newspapers, magazines and blogs.

The many articles published about the mass protests served as a springboard for this project, which integrated existing historical and political science research on the spread of techniques of nonviolent activism with fresh data, collected from survey respondents. Scholars of nonviolent action agree that there is a “constant process of borrowing, adaptation, ‘demonstration effects,’ and help between activists in different locations in which they learn nonviolent strategies from each other” (Roberts and Ash 2009, 23; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, 225). This research attempted to discover some of the information exchange involving Egyptian activists by surveying and interviewing key participants in the Egyptian uprising. It also employed the discipline of religious studies to explain nonviolence as an authentic Muslim expression, drawing upon previous scholarship about Islam and nonviolence. All of these tools were combined to investigate and analyze the possible influence of Sharp’s work on the events of the 2011 mass uprising in Egypt. In reference to Sharp’s writings and theories, “transmission” or “influence” was clearly defined as the presence of Sharp’s work or a link to it on a website or webpage, by the republication of his work by an organization or individual, or by a written or spoken reference giving credit to it in a particular context.

The importance of Sharp’s writings outside academia is that they have the potential to equip people with knowledge that they can leverage against powerful regimes (Raqib 2007, 3). Raqib explains that knowledge of Sharp’s theories has a leveling affect that, when employed by dissident groups, threatens the power of authoritarian governments. Strikingly, nonviolent campaigns have double the success of violent campaigns and are far more successful at establishing democratic governments than violent insurgencies (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, 7, 10). This is one of the main reasons why Sharp’s popularity with activists worldwide is

significant. This project demonstrates that it is well-documented that the reach of his ideas extends to Egypt.

Egypt is a strategic country that lies at the juncture of Africa, Asia and Europe and controls the chokepoint of the Suez Canal along with the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea coasts. Its extreme importance to the United States is demonstrated by the fact that it is the second largest recipient of US foreign aid. Egypt plays a crucial regional role as a cultural leader in the Arab world. Historically, what has happened in Egypt resonated throughout the Middle East. Egypt is an Arab literary and film center, the historic pioneer of Arab nationalism, the birthplace of the oldest and most influential Islamist group (the Muslim Brotherhood), and the largest Arab country. One quarter of all Arabic speakers are Egyptian. Egypt is both home to the largest Christian population of any of the Arab states (about 9%, or almost 8 million), and the site of Al-Azhar University, a globally important religious institution for the 85% of Muslims worldwide who are Sunnis. Egypt also shares a strategic border with Israel.

As mentioned above, the extent of the influence of Sharp's theories in Egypt's revolution is a politically charged, controversial topic. Yet it is undeniable that his ideas played a role. Sharp's writing has gone viral on the Internet and is known to have been passed from activist to activist. On the other hand, some argue that Sharp's role has been exaggerated (Abu-Nimer 2011, 157). During this contentious period while Egyptians struggle to establish and stabilize a representative government to replace the unseated Mubarak, the question will continue to be debated. This paper will review the recent literature about nonviolent action in Egypt's revolution, explain the methodology used to gather research data, present the political and historical context that frames the debate about Sharp's influence on the Egyptian mass protests, and then analyze the research findings.

Literature Review

The worldwide interest generated by the popular uprising in Egypt means that an increasing number of works are being published on this timely issue. These articles argue about the philosophical underpinnings of the revolution, the sources of motivation, and the interpretation of meaning offered by commentators. In reviewing the literature on nonviolent resistance during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, several themes come to the fore. Some of these relate to well-known problems in the field of Middle East Studies: Orientalism, a Eurocentric construction of the Other that distorts study of the region; Arab exceptionalism, the argument that Arab countries, for religious or cultural reasons, are immune to democracy; and the problematic relationship between Western powers and Arab dictators. Opinions on all of these controversies are deployed in the debate about the influence of Sharp's work on the revolution.

Nonviolent resistance is not a novel phenomenon in the Middle East; there are examples of this strategy being used in at least 13 different countries, from Western Sahara to Afghanistan, over the last century. It has been employed to challenge domestic dictators, foreign occupation, and colonial powers. The use of nonviolence is not necessarily ideological or religious: it is often used as an asymmetric tactic after political violence was used first (Stephan 2009, 301).

Merriman pointed out that "people assume [that the strategic use of nonviolence] has an inherent religious or ethical basis," but it has been successfully used by many groups and individuals "not committed to religious or ethical nonviolence" (2009, 18). Most often, it has been used pragmatically and strategically (Stephan 2009, 301). Awareness and implementation of nonviolent strategies in the Middle East predates Sharp's publications--that much is clear.

Crow, Grant and Ibrahim provided a wealth of information in their compilation of the proceedings from an "Arab Thought Forum" conference on nonviolent political struggle held in

Amman, Jordan (1990, vii). The papers they collected included a detailed explanation of the cultural and religious basis for nonviolent struggle in Arab history, its foundations strictly in terms of Islamic teachings and philosophy, and a lengthy string of case studies. The book also delves into questions and controversies about the effectiveness of the strategy of nonviolent struggle in the Arab cultural context. The current debate picks up this thread, as exemplified by Mallat's analysis: He called nonviolence "the conscious, overarching method" and "philosophical essence" of the 2011 Middle East Revolution and argued that it was chosen as a deliberate counterpoise to governmental violence (2011, 137, 139).

This history of nonviolent protest in the Middle East is not well known in the West, and this deficit of knowledge has fueled a heated debate over whether Sharp may have contributed to the Egyptian uprising. Some Arab voices, concerned with countering Orientalism and Arab exceptionalism, contend that their revolution was wholly indigenous in its influences. However, the very nature of Sharp's work undercuts this argument. Sharp provides a theoretical framework for nonviolent strategies, which must be customized by local actors to fit their own cultural environment. Even so, some strenuously object to and even ridicule the claim that Sharp's works have anything to do with the revolution (Stolberg 2011). Mohammed Abu-Nimer argued passionately that "neither Egyptian nor Tunisian protestors followed a Western formula of non-violent resistance campaigns" and added that "Muslim societies are rich in indigenous cultural and religious sources...that can be woven into the making and sustaining of effective non-violent movements" but he failed to acknowledge that the nonviolent tactics taught by Sharp encourage the use of local cultural symbols (2011, 157). Also, Abu-Nimer offered no evidence to back up his claim that protestors did not follow "a Western formula;" indeed, it is considered impossible to prove a negative. Similarly, Da'na not only rejected, but mocked the scenario that "a few

(Western-) educated college graduates, armed with laptops, Facebook accounts, and an Arabic copy of Gene Sharp's *From Dictatorship to Democracy* were behind the revolts" (2011, 150). Nevertheless, *How to Start a Revolution*, the documentary about Sharp's work, featured an interview with Ahmed Maher, a co-founder of the April 6 Youth Movement (an Egyptian Facebook group active in the revolution) who recounted his own use of Sharp's work. This evidence renders problematic a complete rejection of the possibility that Sharp played an inspirational role. On the other hand, the ambitious claim that Sharp is the "author...of the strategies that toppled the Egyptian government" that is beginning to achieve the status of received knowledge in some circles is certainly exaggerated (Kornegay 2012).

One of the most prominent personalities to burst onto the scene during the revolution was Google executive Wael Ghonim. He skyrocketed to fame after an emotional appearance on Dream TV on February 7, 2011. Ghonim, (who had just been released after several days of secret detention by the Egyptian security forces), broke down crying repeatedly during the interview and apologized to the parents of every Egyptian killed during the uprising. Ghonim's vulnerability and sincerity touched a nerve with the Egyptian public and galvanized them against Mubarak. Ghonim, aka "Admin," had played a behind-the-scenes role in mobilizing nonviolent action to protest the brutal police killing of the youth Khaled Said, an incident which outraged the Egyptian public. In his memoir, *Revolution 2.0*, Ghonim explained how a simple Facebook page that he started mushroomed into a social movement and tool for bringing millions of people onto the streets of Egypt. Ghonim's account suggested an almost accidental nature to the demonstrations, which grew and succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. In his writing, he also revealed that he was inspired by Gandhi and, he stated almost coyly, "other advocates of nonviolent resistance" (2011, 107). This interesting turn of phrase invites investigation into

which “other advocates” he meant, especially because the Facebook page was key in disseminating nonviolent strategies (Awad and Dixon 2011).

Increased access to information among members of the public, a phenomenon highlighted by Ghonim’s memoir, certainly facilitated the revolution. Fayad singled out satellite technology that enabled both international television channels and communication platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Google (2011, 119). Only twenty years ago, Arabs could view only one or two stultifying government television channels. Amery agreed with several others that technological innovations in communication, combined with mass education, made it possible for Arabs to compare their own situations with those of others worldwide, and motivated them to seek change (2011, 140). International television channels like Aljazeera (which began broadcasting in 1996), and the advent of satellite TV in general, have raised Arab expectations for democracy. Ghanem (not to be confused with Ghonim) also pointed to Eastern European democratization as a trigger (2011, 132). Since Sharp’s institution trained the activists that brought down the Serbian government and his work was also deployed in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, Ghanem’s premise is important (Arrow 2011). However, some writers claim that the role of social media has been overplayed by American observers. Da’na pointed out that the revolutions began on the periphery in several countries, in remote areas with poor communication, and that the “Facebook narrative” could not explain why uprisings broke out where the purported organizers could not reach (2011, 151). Warf agreed, calling it a “major Western fallacy” that the revolts were a “product of digital technologies and social networking” (2011, 166). Warf’s blanket denial of the importance of communication technology is inaccurate. Chenoweth and Stephan spelled out how lessons are passed from one activist to another to aid in nonviolent mobilization, and suggest that this could be tested in a future study (2011, 224 and 225).

Arab exceptionalism manifested itself in this discussion as the trope that Middle Easterners need a mentor to show them the road to democracy, the implicit assumption that some read into claims for Sharp's influence. Many of the authors surveyed are critical of Western anti-Arab racism, including Paul who singled out Orientalism (for premising that "Muslims as long as they are Muslims will never be free") (2011, 122). To illustrate the pernicious nature of these prejudices, Da'na brandished the preposterous claims of Bernard Lewis, Princeton Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies and author of *The Roots of Muslim Rage*. Lewis "partially attributed the ongoing Arab revolts to what he calls 'sex aspect' and 'sexual rage' . . . which also 'can lead to the suicide bomber, who is attracted by the virgins of paradise'" (2011, 149). The quality and accuracy of Middle Eastern analysis by Western observers has been sharply disputed ever since Edward Said published his seminal work *Orientalism* in 1978. Current discussion on the Arab uprisings is no exception. Several authors were harshly critical; for instance, Warf said "causes have often been portrayed in terms of the simplistic, implicitly racist dogmas that pass for analysis" (2011, 166). Mallat drew attention to the question of why among the many Middle Eastern dissidents who struggled nonviolently against repression there are no household names like Mandela and Lech Walesa. The answer, according to him, is "racist differentiation," that is, the refusal to accord a heroic role to someone of Middle Eastern origin (2011, 142, 143). Paul went as far as to call Orientalism the "theatrical stage...constructed by...successive Western superpowers" and declared that it had finally been dismantled by the revolution (2011, 122). Fayad went further, saying that the protesters crying "peaceful, peaceful" "wanted to reply to their own distorted images in the world" and were motivated by the desire to push back against Orientalist stereotyping (2011, 117). It is against this background that the debate about whether Sharp's work played a role is conducted.

One frame that circumscribed all the events of the revolution is the consistent US support for the authoritarian regimes that controlled Egypt and the region. As Mallat said in his article on the nonviolent philosophy of the 2011 revolutions, “there is little doubt that Western governments colluded strategically with most Middle East dictators” (2011, 142). Zunes and Ebrahim discussed how this collusion, which is well-understood by the Middle Eastern public, has devastated the credibility of US democracy promotion efforts. In *The Road to Tahrir Square*, Gardner revealed how US attempts to protect its strategic interests, by manipulating the Middle East starting in the 1950s, led the region to where it is today. US attempts to support particular dictators or religious figures as foils to others, who behaved counter to US policy objectives, had unforeseen consequences that came to terrible fruition during the intervening decades. These threads amplify skepticism among Arab writers about claims for the influence of Sharp. Da’na attempted to rebut the claim that the revolts “reflect the success of American-led initiatives to promote democracy in the region” (2011, 166). He argued that Arab revolutionary culture is an important force underlying the revolts and that there is a long history of revolution in Egypt, and that several tectonic revolutionary events foreshadowed the 2011 successes (2011, 145, 147).

Several authors elaborated that fear of religious political groups has been used as an excuse to back repressive governments. Hawthorne claimed that US democracy promotion efforts were aimed at marginalizing Islamist groups (2005, 105). Hamid argued that Islamists have tried using nonviolent tactics but not succeeded, specifically because when Islamists were involved, the international community did not provide the necessary condemnation of repressive measures (2009, 75). Nonviolent campaigns are most effective when repression backfires on the regime, drawing international condemnation (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008, 11). This leveraging

effect is integral to the success of a nonviolent option, and has been noticeably absent in campaigns attempted by Islamists.

Finally, the key primary sources for this research were the works of Sharp himself. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* is a “three volume opus” which “established the theoretical foundation for nonviolent action” and “reads as a handbook” (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, 21). In *Politics*, Sharp employed political science concepts to explain the theories of power, then laid out methods and consequences of nonviolent action. This book not only provided a “theoretical and strategic basis” for those carrying out civil resistance, it “remains a starting point for much analysis,” including this effort (Roberts and Ash 2009, 31, 39). Chenoweth and Stephan argue that Sharp’s importance is that he produced a “unified theory on the strategic mechanisms through which civil resistance can work” (2011, 21). *Sharp’s Dictionary of Power and Struggle* was used to select the proper terms to bring consistent and clear terminology to this paper. And, finally, Sharp’s peripatetic *From Dictatorship to Democracy* is the unassuming little primer which launched the entire controversy that this project investigates.

Methodology

The goal of this research was to cut through the controversy about Sharp’s influence by finding out directly from individuals involved in the revolution whether Sharp’s work had played any role in their activism or strategy. Going directly to the principals is the best way to substantiate or disprove reports about what influences they utilized in their activism. Primary sources that were investigated included a personal memoir, websites of political organizations involved in the Egyptian revolution such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Academy of Change, and survey research from interviews. Those interviewed included prominent individuals affiliated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the Academy of Change, the Albert Einstein

Institution and the Center of Islamic Education and Ethics. Questions were asked that would assess the research subjects' knowledge about Sharp and their behavior in transmitting his publications or methods.

Disciplines

This research used three disciplines, history, government, and religious studies, to tease apart the both the controversy and the facts regarding the influence of theorist Gene Sharp in the Egyptian revolution. The question of Sharp's influence is complex because it exists on two levels: first, as an intensely politicized debate which obscures the issues, and second, as a series of historical events to be uncovered. To properly explore to what extent Sharp's ideas were at play in the revolution, it is necessary to unpack the political controversy systematically before looking at what information was uncovered by this research.

In order to unpack the political controversy, this project identified factors fueling the debate swirling around Western influence on the revolution. Factors feeding into the debate are the history of European colonialism in the Middle East, the history of US foreign policy regarding Egypt and the Middle East, the embrace of the thesis of Arab exceptionalism by Western commentators, and the phenomenon of Orientalism. The polarized political debate also has roots in a lack of knowledge about Middle Eastern history and culture. Some Western commentators are unaware of the extensive history of nonviolent campaigns in the Middle East. Commonly-held stereotypes of Islam as a violent religion and Arab culture as peculiarly resistant to democracy make the Egyptian use of nonviolent tactics seem more novel than they were. In turn, some Arab voices, acutely sensitive to the negative Western views of their culture and resentful of stereotypes, are overly defensive, quickly rejecting any suggestion of outside intellectual influences in the revolution without any examination of the facts.

The assertions and counter-assertions being made by commentators on both sides of the debate, which apparently coincide with political positions, can be checked through empirical collection of data, as this research paper aims to accomplish. In order to investigate the facts, a historical inquiry was made into secondary sources to see what had been reported about the use of Sharp's work in Egypt. After that examination of media sources, this investigation attempted to dig deeper by surveying Egyptians involved in the revolution.

Readings

A variety of secondary sources were examined for evidence of links between Sharp and Egyptian activists. Newspaper reports, online news sites, scholarly papers, essays in scholarly publications, and books were all searched for references to Sharp or his publications, especially those that linked his work to the Egyptian activists. Sharp's own publications state that his organization, the Albert Einstein Institution, trained or interacted with activists in the Middle East, specifically including individuals from the countries of Iran, Palestine, Egypt, and Syria.

Another likely source of inspiration for Egypt's activists (besides Sharp's publications) was a number of other nonviolent campaigns in other Middle Eastern countries that occurred over the last century. Scholars of nonviolent action have agreed that there is a "constant process of borrowing, adaptation, 'demonstration effects,' and help between activists in different locations;" they learn nonviolent strategies from each other (Roberts and Ash 2009, 23; Chenoweth and Stephen 2011, 225). To investigate this phenomenon, published data was used to look at research findings about previous conflicts. This researcher sought evidence of previous transfer of information between activists in different times and places in an attempt to understand how activists help each other across borders. When there were reports of Egyptian activists training with others, the question arose of exactly how to assess any knowledge transfer. This

project looked specifically for evidence of Gene Sharp's influence, therefore "transmission" or "influence" was clearly defined as the presence of Sharp's written work or a link to it on a website or webpage, by the republication of his writing by an organization or individual, or by a written or spoken reference giving credit to it in a particular context.

Survey Research

In the attempt to explore the level of awareness about Sharp's work within a politically diverse sample of Egyptians, this research devised two question sets. The first set was a standardized list of short closed-end survey questions. The first two questions, "Are you familiar with the name Gene Sharp?" and "Have you ever seen any information written or published by him?" were designed to produce unambiguous answers. Likewise, a question later in the list, "Do you know if anyone else has posted his work?" forced respondents to choose from an explicit yes or no response which directly answered the research question. The entire list of short questions is available in Appendix I and was designed to produce data that could be tabulated graphically.

While short questions with restricted responses produced clear answers, open-ended questions were used to extract important themes that emerged from the data organically. This inductive method was important because of the small number of subjects this researcher was able to interview. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions was used to gauge awareness of the controversies triggered by Western press coverage of the revolution. The interview method of questioning allowed individuals to express opinions and expand upon the topics of this research. Those interview (opinion) questions are also listed in Appendix I.

The limited size of the group that was studied also affected the method of sampling. Purposive availability sampling was used: informants were selected who were knowledgeable about the Egyptian political situation and the Egyptian revolution, and were willing to talk about

these issues. The Internet was used to identify Egyptian opposition activists, and database searches provided their telephone numbers and email addresses. Other Egyptian activists and opinion leaders were identified through referrals from professors and personal contacts. This researcher attempted to establish contact with the activists and leaders through emails and telephone calls. An email survey was sent as a message to respondent email addresses for the respondent to mark and return. Because of these methods, data gathered was not anonymous. In the case of phone calls, when speaking to one person, this researcher would ask for contact information of others, in that way expanding the network of possible subjects. Thus the original method of availability sampling evolved into “snowball sampling,” as the number of research subjects grew with each contact made, like a snowball rolling downhill (Rubin and Rubin 1995, 124). Snowball sampling was appropriate because the research attempted to contact a hard-to-reach foreign population that was interconnected. When successful contact was established, interviews were carried out via telephone or email.

Attempts to reach more research subjects were terminated when the time allotted for this research neared its end. Because only six individuals were interviewed, no attempt was made to graph the data from the short question set. Instead, information from both question sets was incorporated into the analysis section of this paper. This paper did not attempt to use formal models. Progressive focusing and the inductive approach to interviewing allowed the concentration of the research to be refined as data emerged, so that throughout the process the focus became more precise and meaningful. Because of these methods, the small number of research informants, and their nonrepresentative nature, the findings must be qualified. These qualifications are detailed in the Limitations section.

Data Analysis and Argument

History of Nonviolent Resistance in the Middle East

There is a long history of nonviolent resistance in the Middle East that can be readily traced over the last century. It was a nonviolent campaign known as the 1919 revolution that the Egyptians used to wrest independence from the British in the early 1900s (Pal 2011, 174). The Egyptians incorporated boycotts, strikes, and noncooperation into this early revolution.

According to Ibrahim, Gandhi passed through Egypt on his way from South Africa to India two years later, and incorporated some of the Egyptian nonviolent tactics into his *satyagraha* (“comprehensive theory and practice of nonviolent struggle”) (1990, 7).

Iran, too, has a long history of nonviolent campaigns dating all the way back to the Tobacco Protest in 1890 and the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. This tradition was carried on in the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which was almost wholly nonviolent on the part of the protesters. The 1979 Revolution achieved total success in overthrowing the Shah. Protesters used classic nonviolent tactics. They actively tried to persuade troops to join them, held massive protests (over 100,000 people in Tehran), newspaper shutdowns and labor strikes, and practiced noncooperation and civil disobedience (Pal 2011, 172). More recently, the unsuccessful Green Movement in Iran expressed dissent against the authoritarian regime beginning in 2009. Although the Green Movement was in opposition to the current Iranian government, it was not anti-Islamic or wholly secular. Protesters represented a cross-section of Iranian society, including the traditional and religious, and actively reclaimed religious symbols, for example, organizing chants of “Allahu Akbar” from rooftops (ibid., 167, 171).

One of the longest and most vibrant traditions of nonviolent organizing has been in Palestine, where it first was used in the 1930s against the British Mandate government. After the

creation of the state of Israel, during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, there were ongoing incidences of strikes and hunger strikes by the Palestinians. An important step towards institutionalizing the nonviolent approach was taken when the Center for the Study of Nonviolence was founded in 1985 in Jerusalem by Mubarak Awad, a Palestinian psychologist, and Jonathan Kuttab, a Palestinian human rights attorney. A preparatory meeting for the opening of that center that was held in 1984 was attended by Gene Sharp, among others (Pal 2011, 184). According to Pal, a long article written by Mubarak around that time listed 120 methods of nonviolent struggle and was based upon Sharp's *198 Methods of Nonviolent Protest and Persuasion* (ibid., 185). Palestinian conduct in the First Intifada, which began in 1987, was dominated by nonviolent tactics like general strikes, tax protests, symbolic funerals, renaming schools and streets, and ringing church bells (ibid., 189). According to Pal, Sharp's writings were heavily used in the organizing of the First Palestinian Intifada and translated into Arabic by Awad.

There are more examples of nonviolent action in the Middle East spanning the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. In 1985 Sudanese demonstrators used nonviolent tactics to overthrow the dictatorship of Jaafar Nimeiry, who had ruled Sudan since 1969 (ibid., 176). The Cedar Revolution in 2005 successfully demanded that Syrian troops withdraw from Lebanon, although it did not completely succeed in removing Syrian influence from that country (ibid.). A huge source of inspiration for Egyptian protesters was the Tunisian uprising that overthrew the dictator Ben Ali in early 2011. Finally, of course, the Peaceful Revolution in Yemen and the nonviolent uprising in Syria, which both began in 2011, were inspired in part by the success of the Egyptian revolution. The Syrian uprising has since deteriorated under heavy military pressure from the ruling regime and evolved into a civil war. Organized nonviolent

resistance by Palestinians against Israeli occupation also continued through the 1990s until the present day, although it has been overshadowed by violent campaigns by militants.

Religion and its Role in Nonviolent Resistance

In the Egyptian revolution Muslim and Christian groups cooperated to make sure that their message of opposition to the Mubarak regime was inclusive and nonsectarian. That does not mean that religious symbolism or content was absent. Some demonstrators chose to wear a symbolic cross and crescent t-shirt based on the flag of the Egyptian revolution of 1919. The combination of the two religious symbols in 1919 was meant to show that both Muslims and Copts supported that revolution, according to Dunn (2011). In later years, the symbol continued to be used by the nationalist Wafd party. Its reappearance in the latest uprising was significant because of ongoing tensions between the Muslim and Coptic communities. Copts have long complained of institutionalized discrimination, and often personal disputes have escalated into communal violence. Attacks on Coptic properties and even churches have become frequent in recent years in some regions of Egypt. Egyptian activists have been sensitive to these tensions and their potential to divide Egyptian society. When a bomb attack on the Al-Qiddisayn Church in Alexandria killed 21 on New Year's Eve 2010, Facebook activist Wael Ghonim asked followers of the "We Are All Khaled Said" page to change their profile picture to the cross and crescent image to show support for the Coptic community (Ghonim 2011, 126).

Besides the display of interfaith symbols, a second conscious effort to strengthen interfaith cooperation during the revolution built on initiatives taken as a result of the same church bombing. After the attack on the Coptic church, Muslims organized to create human shields around churches to protect Christians celebrating the Orthodox Christmas (January 7) and some Muslims attended church services (Ghonim 2011, 129). Later that month in Tahrir Square,

Christians lined up to form a cordon around Muslims to protect them from security forces while they made their required prayers. In turn, Muslims assembled around Christians while they celebrated Mass (Kennedy 2011). Many Muslim and Christian protesters chose to join each other's community in worship, an unusual act made in solidarity.

Religious observance was both a source of strength and a powerful symbol of resistance to the regime, most notably on display during the January 28 Day of Rage, when Muslims in congregational prayer on Qasr al-Nil Bridge (which leads to Tahrir Square) continued to worship despite being assaulted with fire hoses. Not only is religion important in empowering individual believers: according to Quandt, "religious groups *are* the majority political institutions in [Middle Eastern] societies" [emphasis his].¹ Egypt's population is 90% Muslim and 10% Christian (CIA, 2012). Hence, it is important to examine Islamic teachings on nonviolence for political as well as religious reasons.

Within Islam, a plethora of exhortations and examples for a nonviolent approach to conflict are found in the two primary sources of law and religious instruction, the Qur'anic scripture and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. The breadth of literature within Islam on nonviolence is far too extensive to be spanned in this paper. Pal provides a thorough and much-needed introduction to the topic in his book, *"Islam" Means Peace: Understanding the Muslim Principle of Nonviolence Today* (2011). On the whole, although they allow for self-defense, proportional use of force and the defense of the helpless, Islamic teachings are very supportive of standing up to oppression without using violence. They encourage the kind of self-sacrifice needed for nonviolent action in the face of violent repression, and Islamic doctrine encourages patience and persistence in the face of even violent abuse. The principles of *sumud*

¹William Quandt (Professor of Politics and former member of the National Security Council), unpublished remarks, Constitution-Making and the Arab Spring conference, University of Virginia Law School, Charlottesville, VA, February 24, 2012.

(steadfastness) and *sabr* (patient perseverance) during suffering are foundational concepts which apply to such a struggle. *Jihad* (literally “struggle”) is not necessarily physical. “The best jihad,” according to a well-known saying of the Prophet Muhammad, “is a word of truth spoken to the face of a tyrannical ruler.” Such beliefs empowered many of the protesters who gathered in Tahrir Square.

Another writer, Satha-Anand, attempts to link Islamic teachings directly with Sharp’s theory of power. In his essay, “The Nonviolent Crescent: Eight Theses on Muslim Nonviolent Action,” Satha-Anand argues that the theory Sharp expounded in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* “simply embodies the basic Islamic principle that a person should submit only to the will of God.” He directly relates this to Sharp’s explanation of how pillars of support can be removed from a dictator by pointing out that according to Qur’anic principles, “a Muslim is not bound to obey anyone whose power is used unjustly.” He goes on to argue that a Muslim’s obligation to oppose injustice matches perfectly with Sharp’s definition of nonviolent action: “It is *not* inaction. It is *action* that is nonviolent” (1990, 34). A model that Satha-Anand created which matches the basic practices of Islam, called the Five Pillars, to nonviolent action is attached as Appendix III.

The Political Context of the Controversy

Orientalism

Orientalism, according to post-colonial and literary theorist Edward Said, is the systematic construction of Muslims as the Other (1978, 2). Said describes Orientalism as a style of thought which distinguishes between the West and the East, and further, as a tool for dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the East. It affects scholarship and foreign policy and permeates academia and popular culture with inaccurate perceptions.

Orientalism erroneously conflates the Muslim and Arab identity, while in reality over 80% of Muslims worldwide are not Arab at all, and Arabs practice a diversity of religions. The “repertory” of Orientalism that subconsciously informs Western conceptions of the Middle East is filled with images of odalisques and turbaned Arabs in oil paintings, a “huge arsenal of images” of violent and irrational Muslims used in news reporting, and film clips of movie clichés, all reinforcing anti-Arab racism (Said, 1998).

Orientalism affects the context of debate about the Egyptian revolution because it operates “in the service of imperial conquest” by serving to discredit Arabs politically (Jhally, 1998). “Concrete historical and institutional conflict,” as Jhally puts it, is ignored in discussion about the Middle East. Instead of deploying the tools of political economy and other rational analysis, scholars substitute cultural explanations. By portraying the Middle East as timeless and outside history, Orientalism positions the Middle East as exceptional and different. An Orientalist approach considers only culture (conflated with religion), to the complete exclusion of other factors. This approach clearly impedes the effectiveness of some Western analysts.

The Arab public is very aware of prejudice against them in the West and resentful of the assumptions that such prejudice generates (Esposito and Mogahed 2007, xiii). According to a Gallup World Poll conducted from 2001 to 2007, “hatred or degradation of Islam and Muslims” is a leading concern for them (ibid., 60-61). It is defensiveness against this perceived prejudice against Arab culture that has sparked some of the negative reaction to news reports about Gene Sharp in Egypt.

Arab Exceptionalism

The theory of Arab exceptionalism states that Arab countries, because of cultural or religious factors (Islam), are resistant to democracy and favor authoritarian rulers. The Arab exceptionalism thesis was promoted in recent years in studies published by Freedom House, an American nonprofit research organization. Freedom House's findings are extensively quoted and cited by writers and are influential in American official and academic circles (Harik 2006, 679).

The thesis propagated by Freedom House, that Muslim states in general and Arab states in specific form a unique group that is deficient in democracy, has been challenged by a number of scholars who fault Freedom House's methodology. Giannone emphasizes the institutional and financial ties of Freedom House to the US government and links its exceptional rankings of Arab and Muslim countries to the Bush Administration's democracy-promotion agenda following the 2003 US invasion of Iraq (2010, 75, 89). He cites nine studies that identify problems with Freedom House's methodology in creating the state rankings (2010, 69). Harik points out that the organization's rankings of Arab states do not respect its own standard criteria, contradict basic facts in its Country Reports, and that other scholars have reached different conclusions (2006, 664).

A logical extension of the Arab exceptionalism thesis is that because Arab countries are culturally resistant to democracy, they need Western guidance, even Western tutors, to develop democratic ideals. It is this patronizing assumption that Arabs read into Western accolades for Sharp, and that triggers their objections to the reports of his influence. Results of the Gallup World Poll indicated that respondents were very sensitive to the West's "disrespect for Islam" (Esposito and Mogahed 2007, 160).

US Support for Dictatorships

The strong reactions generated by suggestions of Sharp's influence in the Egyptian revolution are easier to understand in the historical context of US relations with Egypt. The credibility of the United States with the Egyptian public is very low (Esposito and Mogahed, 2007, 32). The Egyptian public knows well that the United States has historically advocated democracy on one hand while it worked closely with the Mubarak regime on the other. US foreign policy has always preferred the predictable stability of a cooperative dictator.

Arab commentators who reject the idea of American intellectual influence contributing to the revolution do so in part because they see the United States as a self-interested supporter of dictators which has many interests in the Middle East other than building civil society. In Egypt the United States was and is concerned with security, antiterrorism cooperation, investment and trade, and access to oil via the Suez Canal (Carothers and Ottoway 2005, 5). Some observers are also suspicious of hidden agendas. There is wide agreement even among scholars that the United States uses democracy promotion as a tool to promote actors whom it favors. According to Stephan, "efforts at external democracy promotion in the region, notably those led by the US, appear to Middle Easterners and to many foreign observers as inconsistent and rife with double standards" (Stephan 2005, 310). Hawthorne argued that the United States attempted to use democracy promotion to undercut Islamist organizations (2005, 105). Certainly, the stabilization of authoritarian regimes has been at least partly fueled by fears about political Islam.

Egyptians also believe that US programs to support civil society during the Mubarak regime were deliberately ineffective. It is important to understand that the United States "did not want civil society to play a mobilizing role" in Egypt (ibid.). Rather, the United States chose to

focus democracy promotion efforts on support for civil society groups because it assumed that civil society was safe, nonpolitical, and isolated from any trend that could threaten its interests. US democracy aid was “carefully designed to avoid angering or destabilizing incumbent regimes” (Ottoway, 2005, 177; Hawthorne 2005, 99). The US supported only “the [civil society] sectors it considered politically acceptable” at the expense of the omnipresent Islamists (ibid., 101).

Another reason that Egyptians have been suspicious of US involvement is that Mubarak actively supported his regime by turning US democracy promotion programs to his advantage. Regardless of US intentions, the Egyptian government skillfully manipulated programs to its own ends. The United States let Arab governments decide which non-governmental organizations should be funded (ibid., 103). Egyptian regime agencies both penetrated and controlled the non-governmental organizations. Also, Mitchell showed how United States Agency for International Development (USAID) programs were co-opted to empower the regime (1991, 30).

Besides the Mubarak regime’s hijacking of democracy promotion efforts, the idea of a Western push for democracy, and according to some commentators “even the idea of liberal democracy itself,” was tainted by association with the Iraq invasion (Carothers and Ottoway 2005, 9). Arab publics were incensed with their own governments after the United States invaded Iraq in 2003. They identified with the Iraqi people and were angry that their governments were feckless in the face of US aggression (Hawthorne 2005, 101). The US preference for stability over democracy, its perceived insincerity and double standards, and its invasion of Iraq all contributed to the strong reaction of many Arab observers to the suggestion that the Egyptian revolution had an American “genius” behind it.

Sharp's Influence

Both media reports and original survey data indicate that Sharp's writings were one of many sources used by Egyptian activists studying political change and nonviolent strategies in the run-up to the Egyptian revolution. They critiqued previous political activism in Egypt and searched the Internet for information. One group in particular, the Academy of Change (AOC), was influential. It was born when three Egyptian expatriates living in London, Hisham Morsi, Wael Adel, and Ahmed Abdel-Hakim, began thinking about the absence of representative government in the Middle East. As described by Hisham Morsi, they saw the problem as being one of a Middle Eastern political culture defined by military coups that invariably grew into dictatorships.² Morsi and his friends came to the conclusion that Egyptians needed to establish a strong society in which the people could choose who would represent them.

Morsi related that the group went on an intellectual journey which began when they obtained two books from his father-in-law's³ library: *The Iranian Experiment*, and a book about the Sudanese experiment, both in Arabic. These books described the recent history of two Middle Eastern countries which attempted to replace dictators with representative Islamic governments. (In both cases, the resulting governments became authoritarian and committed serious human rights violations.) Morsi and his companions continued to research, and through the Internet, "discovered nonviolent action," including the ideas of Gandhi. Their research eventually led them to Sharp when they found a very bad Arabic translation of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* online, which was virtually unusable, but it piqued their interest enough that they turned to the English publications available on the website of Sharp's organization, the Albert Einstein Institution. They read *There Are Realistic Alternatives* and *From Dictatorship to*

² Hisham Morsi (co-founder, Academy of Change), telephone interview by author, July 1, 2012.

³ Morsi's father-in-law is Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, one of the most influential living Sunni religious scholars, and an unofficial intellectual leader for the Muslim Brotherhood.

Democracy in English. Sharp's "198 Methods of Nonviolent Action" was another influence, "easily available on the Internet," according to Morsi.

According to Khaled Hamza, chief editor of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's (EMB) websites, it was the founders of the AOC who brought Sharp's work to the attention of the EMB, the 75-year-old Islamic movement that was Egypt's largest political opposition force for decades.⁴ Hamza singled out Morsi, who he characterized as a person influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, as having talked about Sharp as early as 2003. According to Hamza, these conversations were part of an attempt to systematically analyze the history of political opposition in Egypt, and to assess and review the work of the EMB itself since its founding in 1938.

This group of reformers not only reviewed Egypt's recent political history including the history of coup and armed struggle, but also examined Gandhi's work in India and the experience of resistance movements in Ukraine and Georgia. They concluded that nonviolent work was the most effective in bringing political change. This led to the EMB's "specialized translation unit" translating Sharp's work in 2005 and posting it on their website, according to Hamza, who said that EMB was the first to publish Sharp's work. He added that this was followed rapidly by its republication by many other movements, including the socialists and Kefaya⁵, nearly simultaneously with the posting of Sharp's work by the AOC. This timing may indicate that the posting of Sharp's work was coordinated.

Coordination also seems to be indicated by the many reports of different opposition movements receiving training in nonviolent strategies and tactics during the period between 2005 and 2011. In November 2005, AOC co-founder Wael Adel traveled to Cairo to train activists, including 30 members of Kefaya, in civil disobedience (Awad and Dixon 2011). Striking textile

⁴ Khaled Hamza (Web Consultant, Ikhwanweb and Honorary Member Arab Commission on Human Rights), telephone interview by author, July 7, 2012.

⁵ The short name for the political group Egyptian Movement for Change, literally "Enough!"

workers in Malhalla al-Kobra had contacts with Kefaya activists (ibid.). Kefaya activists visited Sharp's institute in Boston in 2006, according to Ahmed Maher, a leader of the movement. Dalia Ziada, who now heads the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies in Cairo, attended a Cairo workshop organized by the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (headed by a former student of Sharp's) during which Sharp's "198 Methods of Nonviolent Action" was distributed (Stolberg 2011). Ziada, like many who received training, went on to train others. Members of another group, the April 6 Youth Movement, traveled to Serbia to meet with nonviolent activists who helped topple the Milosevic regime (Kirkpatrick and Sanger, 2011). In 2009, April 6 Youth Movement activist Mohamed Adel spent a week in Belgrade training with CANVAS (Center for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies), an organization which itself was trained by representatives of Sharp's institution (Rosenberg 2011).

While widespread training in nonviolent strategies and tactics was going on, the AOC was interested in "practical research" and experimentation, according to Morsi. It seems that Egypt was their laboratory. Kefaya and the socialists were at the forefront of developing the new nonviolent resistance, and from 2004 to 2007 carried out many innovative and creative protests, from subverting the lyrics of the national anthem to silently protesting with their mouths taped shut (Mansour 2009, 208-209). There were similarities of view between these smaller movements and the EMB, both in critiquing the work of the EMB and in a consensus that a clash between the government of Egypt and the EMB should be avoided at all costs. According to Hamza, Ikhwanweb was actively translating Sharp and passing it to younger members. Meanwhile, Morsi continued to hold many seminars and training sessions in Egypt for activists. Hamza confirmed that activists conducted seminars for two years in nonviolent resistance before the revolution. During this time period, he said, Egypt's major cities like Alexandria and Cairo

were ripe for the idea of nonviolent resistance and absorbed it readily. The medical class, previously nonpoliticized, also became part of the nonviolent resistance movement. Hamza noted that Sharp's work was easily accepted especially because it was purely theoretical and divorced from problematic political attitudes like Orientalism.

While Sharp's works were republished on Egyptian websites, AOC ultimately produced its own materials on nonviolent action. Morsi explained that Sharp's ideas were definitely used, but called it "no more than a major source on the ideas of nonviolent action." He drew the analogy of a scholar using three hundred sources to write a thesis. AOC drew on approximately 45 English and 30 Arabic sources to write their 2007 book *Nonviolent War: The Third Choice*, and Sharp was one of them, according to Morsi.⁶ Also, he pointed out, Sharp's ideas needed to be adapted to fit local culture (something that Sharp himself recommends). Morsi used the example of Sharp's Method of Nonviolent Action #22: protest disrobings. As Morsi said, "By no way will our people protest by removing all their clothes and walking in the street."⁷ In 2007 AOC also published *Civil Disobedience* and *AOC MindQuake*, followed by *Shields to Protect Against Fear* in 2008 (Awad and Dixon 2011).

While activists are very open about the way they used Sharp's writing to inform their work, his name and work is not necessarily recognized by others. Dr. Jasser Auda, an Egyptian expatriate intellectual living in Qatar, represents an example of how Sharp's ideas travel without their origin being recognized. When surveyed, Auda was not familiar with the name Gene Sharp. However, he was aware of theorists "who wrote about the efficiency of nonviolent action" and

⁶ Morsi, interview.

⁷ Ibid.

asserted that they do effect the elite, who in turn influence others. He singled out the AOC as theorists who had influence in the revolution.⁸

During the mass protests themselves, the AOC sent staff members to Cairo to train protest organizers, including members of Campaign for Supporting El-Baradei, the April 6 Movement, the Muslim Brotherhood Youth, and others including liberals, leftists and independents (Kirkpatrick and Sanger 2011). Morsi was arrested in Cairo during this time. In Cairo, activists distributed an anonymous 26-page pamphlet, “How to Protest Intelligently,” that cautioned protesters not to become violent and recommended carrying flowers, befriending the police, and many other tactics familiar from Sharp’s writings (Rosenberg 2011). On 28 January 2011, large numbers of EMB members joined the demonstrations and applied non-traditional, nonviolent tactics, and this is when all the training really paid off, according to Hamza. Along with the “ultras” (hard-core soccer fans accustomed to clashing with police), the Muslim Brotherhood youth manned the front lines that bore the brunt of attacks from security forces (Awad and Dixon 2011; Kirkpatrick and Sanger 2011).

Republication of Sharp’s Work

Sharp’s work was translated and published almost simultaneously by the Muslim Brotherhood, by the AOC, and by other Arabic websites, as explained above. Jamila Raqib, Executive Director of the Albert Einstein Institution, verified that *From Dictatorship to Democracy* was posted on both the Arabic and the English websites of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood from 2005 on. “I think it is very notable that at the time, it was only a very short list of suggested reading, maybe four to five works, mostly Muslim Brotherhood thinkers except for

⁸ Jasser Auda (the Deputy Director of the Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics in Doha, Qatar, and Member of the Executive Board of the International Union of Muslim Scholars), telephone interview by author, June 27, 2012.

Dr. Sharp's book."⁹ In contrast, now the website has a suggested reading list of over 100 works, according to Raqib.

Regarding the availability of translations of Sharp in Arabic, Raqib said she had heard of a Beirut translation of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* that was published in the 1980s. According to King, an Arabic version of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* was circulating in the Occupied Territories and Israel in 1985 (King 2007, 154). Four to seven thousand copies of an Arabic translation of Sharp's *Power, Struggle, and Defense* were distributed in there in 1983-1984 as well (ibid., 137, 393). Currently, two books published by the Albert Einstein Institution, *The Anti-Coup* by Gene Sharp and Bruce Jenkins and *On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking About the Fundamentals* by Robert Helvey, are available for download on the AOC website.

Limitations

This research project explored the extent to which activists and opinion leaders of the 2011 Egyptian uprising were aware of and influenced by the work of Gene Sharp, the leading theorist of nonviolent action. This work is clearly limited by selection bias. It is impossible to take a representative cross-section of participants or organizers of the Egyptian revolution. By necessity, this project utilized a sample population that was self-selected (subjects chose to participate), limited to English speakers from vanguard groups, with Internet access, and belonging to those social networks to which this researcher had access. The process of identifying subjects for research was not systematic and depended upon them already having appeared in the public eye, in media reports of some sort, or having an internet presence.

The revolution encompassed the entirety of Egyptian society, in different locations, from different walks of life, different age groups and of different political opinions. Spanning this spectrum is beyond the scope of this research. However, the original goal of this project was to

⁹ Jamila Raqib (Executive Director of the Albert Einstein Institution), telephone interview by author, July 2, 2012.

acknowledge this diversity and to contact individuals representing a meaningful segment of Egyptian political opinion, and survey representatives of a range of groups, movements and viewpoints, comprising leftists, mainstream Islamists, labor activists, Salafis, feminists, and secular nationalists. Time constraints made this impractical. Many individuals that were contacted by email or telephone did not respond. On the other hand, it was never a goal of this research to carry out random sampling to produce a quantitatively meaningful result, because a quantitative approach requires vast resources.

Since the process of contacting research subjects largely depends upon social or professional networks, the sample surveyed is necessarily nonrepresentative. Members of a network will tend to have contact with other individuals similar to themselves. This social reality led to use of the snowball sampling method in this project. In the snowball method, one research subject provides information that leads the researcher to the next subject, and so on, creating a snowball effect. The end result was that Islamists were well-represented in the sample while other groups were not. The personal opinions and experiences collected by this research can be thought of as providing windows into the events of the 2011 Egyptian revolution through which the observer can catch a glimpse of certain aspects. The aspect is constrained by that individual's experience. It would be misleading to conceptualize the opinions and experiences of one person as puzzle pieces which can be assembled to create a clear and comprehensive image of events. The survey method depends upon personal recollections, and memories can be faulty or incomplete. In addition, the generalizability of this project's findings is not known because the sample was small and not representative.

Finally, there is the question of defining what constitutes influence of Gene Sharp. Sharp has indicated time and again that he is not looking for accolades. "We don't need anyone

claiming credit for me or us or anyone if it's not documented" (2011). Others have attempted to identify when Sharp's methods were used by matching tactics used by protesters to Sharp's *198 Methods of Nonviolent Action*. According to Abu-Nimer, at least 87 of Sharp's 198 methods were used during the first Intifada (2003, 149). Iranian prosecutors, trying dissidents from Iran's Green Movement in 2009, said that more than 100 out of 198 events carried out by protesters were executed "in accordance with the instructions of Gene Sharp," in what they termed "stages of a velvet coup" (ibid., 167). Such matching, while intriguing, does not prove anything, as correlation is not equivalent to causation. Positive confirmation would be necessary to substantiate that the use of a particular tactic, like waving colored flags or engaging in public prayer, was inspired by Sharp's work.

One intriguing approach to gauging Sharp's influence is suggested by Pal, who noted that downloads of the Farsi translation of *From Dictatorship to Democracy* "spiked" during Iran's Green Revolution (ibid.). Unfortunately, this line of inquiry was closed off in reference to the Egyptian revolution, by the fact that the Albert Einstein Institution's website crashed during January to February 2011, due to the "massive new interest" in Sharp's work. The crash appeared to be related to interest generated by the publication of a *New York Times* article on Sharp and the revolution. Thus there is no usable information about the number of Arabic language downloads during that time.¹⁰

Conclusion and Recommendations

Political controversy has unnecessarily confused the issue of the influence of Sharp's theories on the Egyptian mass protests of 2011. To the activists who had a role in introducing Sharp to an Arab audience, the political controversy about whether Sharp's works contributed to the revolution is not important. Hamza made this point by explaining that through five years of

¹⁰ Raqib, interview, July 24, 2012.

joint planning and organizing to bring about nonviolent change in Egypt, “we have surmounted ideological differences and controversy.”¹¹

Those who criticize Western media coverage should consider that a comprehensive account of an event as momentous, as long in the making, and as complex as Egypt’s revolution cannot be encompassed by the pages of a magazine or a brief television news report.

Understandably, reporters focused on novel and interesting facets of the uprising like youthful, English-speaking protesters who were adept at using Facebook and Twitter. Media portrayals of Egyptians, however, as young, tech-savvy, and secular have been challenged by some as an attempt to sanitize and hijack the revolution (El-Mahdi 2011). A supposed media infatuation with Gene Sharp, guru of nonviolence, was interpreted as a Western attempt to steal credit from Egyptians and create a white savior. Despite their focus on Sharp, Western reporters ironically overlooked what this research has shown--that it was Islamic activists who brought his theory to the table in Egypt—and that it was the much-maligned Muslim Brotherhood that officially translated his work and was a leader in posting it online.

Sharp is but one of many influences on the revolution. And while his influence was limited, it was real. AOC co-founder Morsi pointed out that he and his colleagues consulted some seventy-five sources to write *Nonviolent War: The Third Choice*, of which Sharp was only one.¹² The eclectic assortment of writings which AOC has drawn upon for inspiration confounds conventional views of Muslim activists as narrow-minded zealots. The diverse sources of material they currently post on their website ranges from ACT UP! to Greenpeace and defies stereotypes; this anomaly invites further exploration. In commenting on Sharp’s influence on the revolution, Morsi reflected that it was part of the life cycle of an idea that was born with

¹¹ Hamza, interview.

¹² Morsi, interview.

Thoreau, picked up by Gandhi, passed on to Martin Luther King and in turn used by Egyptians.

¹³ Egypt's uprising is important because it is a model of a successful nonviolent path toward change, which has already inspired other freedom movements in the Middle East. Its success undermines the logic and propaganda of militant and violent movements. In addition, the structure and conduct of a revolution is a strong predictor of what kind of government will follow it (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, 10). The intellectual journey that led Morsi, Adel and Abdel-Hakim to Sharp's work began with an inquiry into how Egyptians could achieve a government that represented the people.

Events in Egypt have raised many questions for researchers, and many avenues of investigation can be explored to learn more about the use of nonviolent strategies there. A systematic analysis of archived web pages administered by groups active in the uprising would yield more information about how common the republication of Sharp's work was. There is no doubt that his writings were circulated. A quantitative study would demonstrate exactly to what extent that occurred, and whether that circulation was widespread or limited to certain political groups.

Another avenue with great potential for research would be to carefully match protesters' tactics used during the Egyptian revolution to Sharp's *198 Methods*. This could involve examining photographs, video footage, and news reports to document Egyptians' use of nonviolent tactics from labor strikes to singing, painting protest murals, and praying, then mapping them one-to-one to the *Methods*. Researchers have previously mapped such a correspondence in uprisings in Iran and Palestine (Abu-Nimer 2003, 149; Pal 2011, 167).

Further research should be done to describe the entire spectrum of groups who participated in the revolution, and assess to what extent Sharp's ideas were shared across

¹³ Ibid.

political divisions. For instance, a number of groups that operated under an umbrella organization appear to have coordinated their nonviolent training, and this can be investigated. There is also the question of cooperation across national borders. Egyptian activists readily acknowledge the influence of their Serbian predecessors. Palestinians were advised by youthful Egyptian trainers that they should study Gene Sharp (Hijab 2011). Currently, the Academy of Change posts video of the American and European Occupy movements on its website. Do these links indicate a direct relationship or simply inspiration? A related study would be to map social connections between activists and attempt to trace networks along which ideas traveled.

Pal has suggested that the tradition on nonviolence in Islam has gone virtually unstudied (2011, 15). Powerful support for this claim is found in the experience of Abu-Nimer, who related that he made a Library of Congress catalog search for resources on “Islam and nonviolence” that returned less than five items, while a search for “Islam and violence” flooded the screen with thousands of entries” (2003, 2). While it is common for practitioners of Islam to assert that their faith is a religion of peace, few academics have pursued the line of research that Pal proposes. The subject deserves systematic scholarly investigation and may shed light on what surprised and disconcerted some observers: that the 2011 uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, understood in the West as not Islamic, were followed by an unexpectedly strong showing by Islamist parties. The finding of this research, that Muslim reformers linked to the Muslim Brotherhood played a leading role in introducing Sharp’s work, emphasizes the need for further inquiry.

Sharp matters because he is extremely popular with political activists internationally, for his pragmatic theory of power and extensive list of nonviolent tactics. He matters because the use of nonviolent action is becoming more prevalent worldwide and poses a threat to autocrats and

dictators. He matters because when uprisings take a nonviolent form, they have a greater chance of transitioning to democratic government (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, 10). Sharp's 198 *Methods of Nonviolent Action* is to the activist what Mendeleev's periodic table was to the 19th century chemist. It is a blueprint for organizers that spells out the fundamental building blocks of political action. Egyptian activists, like others, eagerly embraced Sharp's approach because, as he is fond of saying, it works. And what Egyptians do matters, because what happens in Egypt resonates all over the Middle East, and what happens in the Middle East resonates across the globe. This research has documented that Muslim activists at the Academy of Change and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood were at the forefront of introducing Sharp's writing to Egypt's activist community, and that a diversity of political groups worked together to disseminate his theories. Their cooperation and coordination had much to do with their success. Their efforts were an important part of the long and difficult years of planning, struggle and sacrifice that the Egyptian people spent making Egypt's revolution happen.

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APPENDIX I
Survey and Interview Questions

Survey and Interview Questions (Identical for telephone, Skype, and email)

Survey Questions

1. Are you familiar with the name Gene Sharp?
2. Have you ever seen any information written or published by him?
3. (If yes) Where did you see it?
4. (If yes) When did you see it?
5. (If yes) Have you shared or recommended this information to others?
6. (If yes) Have you linked to his information, or passed it on in any way?
7. (If yes) Did you use any of his ideas in your political activities?
8. (If yes to #7) What idea did you use? When and where did you use it?
9. Do you know if anyone else has posted his work?
10. (If yes to #9) Who posted his work and where?

Interview (Opinion) Questions

11. Were Sharp's ideas used during the revolution?
12. Do you have any concerns about addressing the question of whether Sharp's ideas were used during the revolution?
13. Do you have comments on the political controversy about Sharp's influence in Egypt?

APPENDIX II

The Methods of Nonviolent Protest and Persuasion

Source: Gene Sharp, [The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Vol. 2: The Methods of Nonviolent Action](#) (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973).

Formal Statements

1. Public Speeches
2. Letters of opposition or support
3. Declarations by organizations and institutions
4. Signed public statements
5. Declarations of indictment and intention
6. Group or mass petitions

Communications with a Wider Audience

7. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
8. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
9. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
10. Newspapers and journals
11. Records, radio, and television
12. Skywriting and earthwriting

Group Representations

13. Deputations
14. Mock awards
15. Group lobbying
16. Picketing
17. Mock elections

Symbolic Public Acts

18. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
19. Wearing of symbols
20. Prayer and worship
21. Delivering symbolic objects
22. Protest disrobings
23. Destruction of own property
24. Symbolic lights
25. Displays of portraits
26. Paint as protest
27. New signs and names
28. Symbolic sounds
29. Symbolic reclamations
30. Rude gestures

Pressures on Individuals

- 31. "Haunting" officials
- 32. Taunting officials
- 33. Fraternalization
- 34. Vigils

Drama and Music

- 35. Humorous skits and pranks
- 36. Performances of plays and music
- 37. Singing

Processions

- 38. Marches
- 39. Parades
- 40. Religious processions
- 41. Pilgrimages
- 42. Motorcades

Honoring the Dead

- 43. Political mourning
- 44. Mock funerals
- 45. Demonstrative funerals
- 46. Homage at burial places

Public Assemblies

- 47. Assemblies of protest or support
- 48. Protest meetings
- 49. Camouflaged meetings of protest
- 50. Teach-ins

Withdrawal and Renunciation

- 51. Walk-outs
- 52. Silence
- 53. Renouncing honors
- 54. Turning one's back

THE METHODS OF SOCIAL NONCOOPERATION**Ostracism of Persons**

- 55. Social boycott
- 56. Selective social boycott
- 57. Lysistratic nonaction
- 58. Excommunication
- 59. Interdict

Noncooperation with Social Events, Customs, and Institutions

- 60. Suspension of social and sports activities
- 61. Boycott of social affairs
- 62. Student strike
- 63. Social disobedience
- 64. Withdrawal from social institutions

Withdrawal from the Social System

- 65. Stay-at-home
- 66. Total personal noncooperation
- 67. "Flight" of workers
- 68. Sanctuary
- 69. Collective disappearance
- 70. Protest emigration (*hijrat*)

THE METHODS OF ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION: (1) ECONOMIC BOYCOTTS**Actions by Consumers**

- 71. Consumers' boycott
- 72. Nonconsumption of boycotted goods
- 73. Policy of austerity
- 74. Rent withholding
- 75. Refusal to rent
- 76. National consumers' boycott
- 77. International consumers' boycott

Action by Workers and Producers

- 78. Workmen's boycott
- 79. Producers' boycott

Action by Middlemen

- 80. Suppliers' and handlers' boycott

Action by Owners and Management

- 81. Traders' boycott
- 82. Refusal to let or sell property
- 83. Lockout
- 84. Refusal of industrial assistance
- 85. Merchants' "general strike"

Action by Holders of Financial Resources

- 86. Withdrawal of bank deposits
- 87. Refusal to pay fees, dues, and assessments
- 88. Refusal to pay debts or interest
- 89. Severance of funds and credit
- 90. Revenue refusal
- 91. Refusal of a government's money

Action by Governments

- 92. Domestic embargo
- 93. Blacklisting of traders
- 94. International sellers' embargo
- 95. International buyers' embargo
- 96. International trade embargo

THE METHODS OF ECONOMIC NONCOOPERATION: (2) THE STRIKE**Symbolic Strikes**

- 97. Protest strike
- 98. Quickie walkout (lightning strike)

Agricultural Strikes

- 99. Peasant strike
- 100. Farm Workers' strike

Strikes by Special Groups

- 101. Refusal of impressed labor
- 102. Prisoners' strike
- 103. Craft strike
- 104. Professional strike

Ordinary Industrial Strikes

- 105. Establishment strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 107. Sympathetic strike

Restricted Strikes

- 108. Detailed strike
- 109. Bumper strike
- 110. Slowdown strike
- 111. Working-to-rule strike
- 112. Reporting "sick" (sick-in)
- 113. Strike by resignation
- 114. Limited strike
- 115. Selective strike

Multi-Industry Strikes

116. Generalized strike

117. General strike

Combination of Strikes and Economic Closures

118. Hartal

119. Economic shutdown

THE METHODS OF POLITICAL NONCOOPERATION**Rejection of Authority**

120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance

121. Refusal of public support

122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance

Citizens' Noncooperation with Government

123. Boycott of legislative bodies

124. Boycott of elections

125. Boycott of government employment and positions

126. Boycott of government depts., agencies, and other bodies

127. Withdrawal from government educational institutions

128. Boycott of government-supported organizations

129. Refusal of assistance to enforcement agents

130. Removal of own signs and placemarks

131. Refusal to accept appointed officials

132. Refusal to dissolve existing institutions

Citizens' Alternatives to Obedience

133. Reluctant and slow compliance

134. Nonobedience in absence of direct supervision

135. Popular nonobedience

136. Disguised disobedience

137. Refusal of an assemblage or meeting to disperse

138. Sitdown

139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation

140. Hiding, escape, and false identities

141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws

Action by Government Personnel

- 142. Selective refusal of assistance by government aides
- 143. Blocking of lines of command and information
- 144. Stalling and obstruction
- 145. General administrative noncooperation
- 146. Judicial noncooperation
- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents
- 148. Mutiny

Domestic Governmental Action

- 149. Quasi-legal evasions and delays
- 150. Noncooperation by constituent governmental units

International Governmental Action

- 151. Changes in diplomatic and other representations
- 152. Delay and cancellation of diplomatic events
- 153. Withholding of diplomatic recognition
- 154. Severance of diplomatic relations
- 155. Withdrawal from international organizations
- 156. Refusal of membership in international bodies
- 157. Expulsion from international organizations

THE METHODS OF NONVIOLENT INTERVENTION**Psychological Intervention**

- 158. Self-exposure to the elements
- 159. The fast
 - a) Fast of moral pressure
 - b) Hunger strike
 - c) Satyagrahic fast
- 160. Reverse trial
- 161. Nonviolent harassment

Physical Intervention

- 162. Sit-in
- 163. Stand-in
- 164. Ride-in
- 165. Wade-in
- 166. Mill-in
- 167. Pray-in
- 168. Nonviolent raids
- 169. Nonviolent air raids
- 170. Nonviolent invasion
- 171. Nonviolent interjection
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Social Intervention

- 174. Establishing new social patterns
- 175. Overloading of facilities
- 176. Stall-in
- 177. Speak-in
- 178. Guerrilla theater
- 179. Alternative social institutions
- 180. Alternative communication system

Economic Intervention

- 181. Reverse strike
- 182. Stay-in strike
- 183. Nonviolent land seizure
- 184. Defiance of blockades
- 185. Politically motivated counterfeiting
- 186. Preclusive purchasing
- 187. Seizure of assets
- 188. Dumping
- 189. Selective patronage
- 190. Alternative markets
- 191. Alternative transportation systems
- 192. Alternative economic institutions

Political Intervention

- 193. Overloading of administrative systems
- 194. Disclosing identities of secret agents
- 195. Seeking imprisonment
- 196. Civil disobedience of "neutral" laws
- 197. Work-on without collaboration
- 198. Dual sovereignty and parallel government

APPENDIX III

Satha-Anand's Model of Five Pillars of Nonviolent Action Corresponding to the "Five Pillars" of Islam¹⁴

FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

APPLICATION TO NONVIOLENT ACTION

1. Statement of Faith:
There is nothing worthy of worship except God and Muhammad is a messenger of God.

Muslims are courageous and willing to disobey injustice because they fear only God.
2. Five Daily Prayers

Praying shoulder to shoulder is an affirmation of equality and an exercise in discipline and collective action.
3. Regular Charity

The charity tax sensitizes Muslims to the problems of others and induces them to do something about it, hence it embodies social concern and action.
4. Fasting in the Month of Ramadan

Fasting from dawn to sunset builds tremendous self-discipline. This instills patience and the ability to suffer for a cause, traits needed in nonviolent protest.
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca

The pilgrimage ritual reaffirms the idea of unity and teaches that race, color, nationality and class are insignificant.

¹⁴ (Satha-Anand 1990, 36; Pal 2011, 16).

